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U.S. Department of Energy
Before the
Senate Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

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Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) budget request and for this Committee's past support for our important national security responsibilities. Before I do, I would like to note the presence of the new Deputy Administrator for Defense Programs, Tom D'Agostino. I want to thank this Committee and the Senate for acting so rapidly in confirming him as the replacement for Dr. Ev Beckner. I think the committee will enjoy working with Tom, who is an outstanding public servant.

The President's budget supports the three main NNSA missions: assure a safe, secure, reliable and effective nuclear weapons stockpile; reduce the threat posed by nuclear proliferation; and provide reliable and safe nuclear reactor propulsion systems for the U.S. Navy. My written statement, which I would like to include for the record, covers nonproliferation and Naval Reactors. I would like to confine my oral remarks to the weapons program.

Let me stress at the start that the stockpile remains safe and reliable. This assessment is based on experiments, computation and analysis, including extensive laboratory and flight tests of warhead components and subsystems.

As we continue to draw down the stockpile, however, we must consider the long-term implications of successive warhead refurbishments. Each refurbishment takes us further from the tested configurations, raising concerns about our ability to ensure stockpile safety and reliability over the very long term.

To manage this long-term risk we need to transform the nuclear weapons stockpile and the supporting infrastructure. Our concept for doing so depends on the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW). The RRW would relax Cold War design constraints that maximized yield to weight ratios and allow us to design replacement components that are easier to manufacture, are safer and more secure, eliminate environmentally dangerous materials, and increase design margins. This will both ensure long-term reliability and reduce chance we would ever need to test again.

Two independent design teams from our nuclear weapons laboratories are exploring RRW options. The process is providing a unique opportunity to train the next generation of nuclear weapons designers and engineers. Both teams are confident their designs will

meet established requirements and be certifiable without nuclear testing. Preliminary designs will be provided this month, after which intensive peer review will lead to selection of a preferred option.

I think it is important to understand that today's nuclear weapons complex is not the same one that helped win the Cold War. The fact is, this country's nuclear weapons complex has seen dramatic reductions, not only in size, but also in terms of funding. In 1990, our nuclear weapons complex employed nearly 60,000 people. Today, we employ about half that number, and the footprint of our facilities has shrunk from 70 million square feet to less than 40 million. This includes closing down four facilities, including, for example, the Rocky Flats plant in Colorado, and the Pinellas plant in Florida.

But, today's complex is still not the right size or configuration. I believe we must continue to implement what the President outlined in his 2001 Nuclear Posture Review, a modern responsive infrastructure that can sustain the nation's nuclear deterrence, while capable to respond to the Department of Defense's (DoD) needs quickly and effectively.

We are carrying out an intensive effort to establish our vision for the future nuclear weapons complex and the pathways leading to that vision. As part of this effort, we have reviewed the recommendations from the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board (SEAB) Nuclear Weapons Complex Task Force report, sometimes called the Overskei report. Our major challenge is to find a transition path that is both affordable and feasible while continuing to support the near-term needs of the current stockpile. We will report in more detail on this effort later this spring.

Let me highlight some other challenges:

- In the long term, a pit production capacity is an essential part of a more responsive nuclear weapons infrastructure. We are disappointed, therefore, that Congress declined to fund planning for a modern pit production facility in FY 2006. As a result, we did not seek funding for such a facility in FY 2007. We will work with the Congress to identify an agreed approach to fund long-term pit requirements.

- FY 2006 Congressional reductions for warhead Life Extension Programs (LEP) challenge our ability to meet DoD requirements. In particular the $13M (8%) reduction to the W76 LEP request significantly increases the risk to achieving first production unit by the end of FY 2007. The $37M (27%) reduction to the W80 LEP will delay deployment, increase costs, and delay introduction of important use control features to strengthen security. We hope that this Committee renews its support for these critical LEPs.

- Last year Congress significantly reduced funds for the Facilities and Infrastructure Recapitalization Program (FIRP) program to revitalize the physical infrastructure

of the nuclear weapons complex. This means that eliminating the maintenance backlog and terminating the FIRP program by 2011 is no longer attainable. We will seek a two-year extension of this effort. We remain committed to the concept of FIRP as a temporary program with long-term funding of maintenance within the RTBF program.

Mr. Chairman, we are conscious of the need to be wise stewards of the public's money. Compared to the projections submitted to the Congress with the FY 2005 budget, we have reduced our weapons program by $860 million, with over half going to deficit reduction and the remainder to other high priorities like non-proliferation. Our request this year is balanced and responsible. If approved by the Congress, the President's request will continue transforming the nuclear stockpile and infrastructure, reduce the global danger from proliferation, and enhance Navy force projection capabilities. I urge the committee to support it.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions.